THEATERS—MOVIES

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MUSIC—ART

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The Stage and Its People

Patrica Clary in "Down Limerick Way".

Beatrice Sommers in "I'll Say She Does"

Marjorie Hast in Scandal

Doris Lloyd in "Frivolities of 1920"

Jim Bernard in "As You Were".

Irene Bordoni in "As You Were".

Nonette at the 81st Street

Marjorie McDonald in "Happy Days"

Evan Burrow's Fontaine at the Capitol.

Bertha Kalich in "The Riddle Woman".

Behind the Scenes

With Philip Mindil

OTIS SKINNER looked anything but the romantic actor he is as he reminisced in a big leather chair in his room at the Hotel Pennsylvania, puffing on his stubby little briar pipe and appearing for all the world like a prosperous business man at his ease. Thank heaven, he didn't wait to be asked how he came to go on the stage, whether his people were in the theatrical world or what kind of parts he liked best! Mr. Skinner likes to tell stories at his own expense, and he started that way, branching out into the many things he has done in a long, varied and eventful career on the stage.

"Last summer," he said, "I took a little place in the Rockies, 9,000 feet above sea level, and my daughter, Cornelia, and I ventured out on horseback on a jaunt over the divide, 12,000 feet. At one hotel where we stopped I noticed that at a large table, where a big family was seated, there seemed to be a lot of whispering and eying in our direction. So I was not surprised when we arose and made for the door to be stopped by a young girl from the table, who asked timidly if I would write in her autograph album.

"'You're my grandmother's favorite actor,' she added.

"Another time, passing through a town where I was to play, I was riding in a trolley car and a little boy was noticing the many lettered billboards of our show we passed, reading 'Otis Skinner, in So-and-So.' Finally, unable to contain himself longer, he howled: 'Mother, what is an ottis skinner, anyway?'

"Recently, when we were playing Norfolk, the gentlemanly hotel clerk asked me how business was and I told him we were turning people away at every performance. 'Don't it beat all?' he said, cheerfully. 'Since the war the people are spending their money like drunken sailors!'

"Actors?" said Mr. Skinner, "why, yes, we have them in heaps and piles, but aren't the Barrymores the 'white hopes' of the American stage? And isn't it fine to find them doing so wonderfully through an inheritance of three generations through the Drews and through their talented father?

"Is this the day of the romantic drama again? Oh, don't put it that way. There's always room for the romantic drama along with everything else. And Shakespeare? Yes; if he's played well. That's the trouble. So few have had the training.

"Now, take Mr. Sothern, for instance; he is getting great results, for two reasons. He has a lot of good old standbys like 'Rowley' Buckstone, and then he works like a nailer with the new ones to make them get all out of Shakespeare there is in him. It's a hard and a worthy task.

"Want to get down to me, eh? All right. I am the son of a Boston clergyman and my people were very much opposed to my going on the stage, but I was firm and took all my little knocks and things—lucky I did, too, as you shall learn—because I wanted to absolutely sever all connection with the home, and went to Philadelphia, where I joined a stock company at the princely salary of $8 a week. Oddly enough, that's my home now. I live at Bryn Mawr, where my daughter is a student in the college and my wife is getting ready to put on the spring fete for the college.

"Well, I worked for a regular Vincent Crummles. I had a wonderful experience that first season for a beginner. In thirty-five weeks I played more than a hundred parts. With my pipestem legs and French dancing-master manner, I was cast for first old man, but I played everything from a blackface negro wench to Pantaloon in the Christmas pantomime.

"I paid $1.50 for my miserable little room, but even then there was never enough left for food and clothes. When I'd go to the manager for an advance on my salary, saying, 'Really, I must eat, you know!' he'd pull from his pocket a picture of himself, his blooming wife and seventeen fat children and say, with a ready tear flowing down his ruddy cheek: 'Yes, my lad. So must they. My darlings must be my first care.' Then I would hie me sadly to my little, cold room, open my little zinc trunk, take from it an armful of my precious books and sell them at Leary's second-hand book store in Ninth Street for a couple of dollars and go out and eat.

"I like this play of Mrs. Skinner's because of its basic emotion of father love. She'll write more, I hope. Whether for me or not, I cannot say.

"My list of plays is really too long to recount. I've played with Lawrence Barrett, Janauschek, Lotta, McCullough, John T. Raymond, Fanny Davenport, Ada Cavendish, Ada Rehan, Edwin Booth, Modjeska, Margaret Mather and many others. I've done lots of Shakespeare—'Hamlet,' 'Richard III,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Taming of the Shrew' and others.

"You remember me as Lanciotto, the deformed warrior in 'Francesca da Rimini,' when I had Aubrey Boucicault, Marcia Van Dresser and William Norris with me? Well, years before that I played Paolo to Lawrence Barrett's Lanciotto, Marie Wainwright's Francesca and Louis James's Pepe. Wilton Lackaye had a small part in the play.

"I did 'On a Balcony' with Sarah Cowell LeMoyne and Eleanor Robson, and after Ada Rehan had retired George C. Tyler brought us together for three plays, 'Merchant of Venice,' 'School for Scandal' and 'Taming of the Shrew.' It was next to her last season.

"Hajj in 'Kismet,' which ran three seasons, is one of the best parts I ever played. 'Kismet' is full of romance and Hajj, well, he has everything. Three of the most recent plays I put on were 'The Honor of the Family,' 'Cock of the Walk' and 'Mister Antonio.'"

But there are many who remember with a thrill Otis Skinner's "His Grace de Grammont," that dissolute old roue; his adorable tramp in "The Harvester," "The King's Jester," "Villon the Vagabond" and the countless other things in which this versatile, graceful actor, with the magical hands, the appealing eyes and the mellow voice gave pleasure to thousands of playgoers the country over before fastidious New York would take him to her arms.

Mr. Skinner's present vehicle, "Pietro," by his wife and Jules Eckert Goodman, at the Criterion Theatre, pictures him first as a poor Italian, unable to understand a word of English, and later as a wealthy landowner, who has "struck it rich" in California.

Effie Shannon Shows How "Very Sick Lady" Can Abound in Health

Everything ran smoothly at the opening of "Mamma's Affair" last Monday evening at the Little Theater, except the elevator. The theater has been remodeled, but they must have forgotten to oil the mainsprings of the tiny lift that carries the actors and actresses from the stage to their dressing rooms two stories up. It worked well enough to carry Katherine Kaelred, George Le Guere and Ida St. Leon aloft, but when Effie Shannon was ready to ascend it balked.

I was waiting for Miss Shannon in the greenroom, at the entrance to the dressing rooms. In a few minutes a springy step was heard on the stairs, and she appeared, slightly out of breath and carrying a bunch of violets in her hand. She must have just taken something, as she had been doing throughout her charming performance as the hypochondriac mother, for she looked like anything but a sick person. On the stage she had been shocked by the slightest noise and had required so much attention from her daughter that the latter and not the mother became the real patient. Off the stage she seemed full of vitality and quite able to take care of herself.

"You don't look a bit sick, Miss Shannon. You must have had a good doctor who gave you good medicine to take," she was told.

Miss Shannon smiled.

"Nor do I feel sick," she said banteringly, seating herself on the leather settee.

"I have never been sick," Miss Shannon continued, "and have had few dealings with doctors. I have no patience at all with people who are always talking about their ailments and are surrounded by a contingent of doctors, who, scenting large fees, invent ailments for the patient's edification."

Miss Shannon was talking about the very type of woman which she had just portrayed so successfully on the stage.

"Perhaps because I dislike them so I am able to act the part as I do."

"Had you studied the type before playing it?" Miss Shannon was asked.

"No, that wasn't necessary. After all, acting is largely imagination and if you have imagination you should be able to play any part.

"All of us just love this play, it is so real and human. When I first read it I thought it was a tragedy and I felt rather doubtful about it. Then I read it over again and the humor of the situations—there is humor in anything, no matter how dark it appears—struck right home. I thought to myself that life would be hardly worth while without a sense of humor, and I became enthusiastic about the play."

Effie Shannon is a harsh critic of "mother love." She believes most of it is too selfish and that the example which is brought out in the play is not an exaggeration but a picture of what actually exists to a large degree. Not that all mothers are hypochondriacs who demand the entire attention of their children.

Then she rushed off to her dressing room, again praying that she was not a hypochondriac.

Openings of the Coming Week

MONDAY—At the Standard Theater Fiske O'Hara will be seen for the first time in New York in his romantic comedy, "Down Limerick Way."

At the Théâtre Parisien "Ma Tante d'Honfleur" ("My Aunt From Honfleur"), comedy by Paul Gavault, is the next offering. A new member will be introduced, Mlle. Colette Burani.

TUESDAY—At the Central Theater E. Ray Goetz will present Sam Bernard and Irene Bordoni in "As You Were," a revue by Arthur Wimperis, adapted from Rip's "Plus Change." The American version is by Glen MacDonough. "As You Were" has been seen in London and Paris. The music is by Herman Darewski and Mr. Goetz, who also contributed some of the lyrics. The American presentation is made by arrangement with Charles B. Cochran. George Marion staged the piece and Julian Mitchell put on the musical numbers. Besides Mr. Bernard and Miss Bordoni, the cast includes Minerva Coverdale, Clifton Webb, Hugh Cameron, Ruth Donnelly, Stanley Harrison, Frank Mayne, Grant Kimball, Echlin Gayer and Violet Strathmore.

A Woman Unafraid

By Silas B. Fishkind

BOX office appeal means money, and money means success. This is Mrs. Henry B. Harris's measure for determining whether to continue a play on the boards or to ship it to the warehouse from which it seldom, if ever, returns. She loves the beautiful, the ideal, in the drama, but does not feel that she should produce plays in half-filled theaters and in the face of dwindling weekly receipts.

In her office at the Hudson Theater, the same room from which her husband directed his many theatrical ventures before his death on the Titanic in 1912, the dark-haired, keen-eyed, rather slight woman described her very practical view of the business of play producing.

"You know, I enjoy my work immensely; I could not think of doing anything else. Yet I have no illusions about art for art's sake. There is the practical side of the question to be considered, and I think of the box office before deciding to produce a play. Perhaps some time, when I can set aside several hundred thousand dollars, I shall be able to put on plays regardless whether they will make money or not."

But Mrs. Harris explained that she would not even consider a manuscript, though it promised to bring throngs of theatergoers to the box office, if it were not thoroughly clean and wholesome. Her practicality has its limitations.

Mrs. Harris believes in the old theory that, after all, the theater is a place where people come for entertainment. To provide new means of entertainment in the form of new plays the producer must have funds. Not every new production which a manager makes is a success, and failures, many of them, are to be expected. One success, however, according to Mrs. Harris's estimate, makes up for five failures, and this success enables a producer to keep progressing.

All the plays produced under the direction of the estate of Harry B. Harris since 1912 were chosen by Mrs. Harris. She reads about ten plays a month and every manuscript, whether it comes from an author who has made his way or from an unheard-of novice, is carefully considered.

"Reading plays provides much of the fun in this business. Especially do I enjoy reading the poor plays. They are usually sincere attempts and contain situations which are funny, but impossible to produce.

"When I pick up a play for the first time I have this thought in my mind. 'Will the public like it? Will they come to see it and urge others to come to see it?' That is the only thing that counts with me in the consideration of the possibilities of a manuscript except for the limitation, of course, that the play be clean, wholesome, and inoffensive. I thrust my own individual likes and dislikes out of the question entirely. To be liked by the public a play does not necessarily have to be liked by me. But there are plays which I enjoy at the very first reading and which I know the theater public will enjoy. Then I am sure that I have a success."

Probably 80 per cent of the plays she reads, Mrs. Harris believes, are not worthy of consideration. The most prevalent fault she notes, especially among young authors, is a superfluity of ideas, which are encompassed in one three- or four-act play. Any one of the ideas, she believes, properly worked out, would furnish an excellent basis for a play.

Mrs. Harris and the interviewer were chatting pleasantly about types of plays. She had feared, she said, that The Tribune would send up a big, formidable person, who would shoot questions at her in a manner indicating that he would not take "no" for an answer. She found instead a gentle youth of moderate dimensions.

"You can say for me that it is useless to send me farces. I never could judge a farce, and I don't believe I ever shall be able to. Frankly, I do

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